

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan's bill to help veterans make the transition from military life to the business world was approved unanimously last night by the U.S. House.

The "SBA Veterans' Programs Act of 2007" (H.R. 2366), introduced by Buchanan last month, requires the SBA to increase its outreach to veterans and authorizes federal funding for grants and services to help veterans start, manage, or grow a small business.

"Successful small businesses require a lot of planning and hard work," said Buchanan. "Veterans of America's armed forces have the character and skills necessary to be successful entrepreneurs, but many lack the capital, research, specialized training, and technical assistance to succeed. This bill will help veterans make the transition from soldier to small business owner. It will also help create jobs and boost the economy."

The SBA veterans' programs bill authorizes small business grants between \$75,000 and \$250,000 each, provides online counseling and distance learning for veterans and members of the Armed Forces, increases coordination among organizations that assist veterans, and creates a marketing campaign to promote awareness regarding SBA programs for veterans. The bill also requires the SBA to increase the number of Veterans Business Outreach Centers, which provide business training, counseling, technical assistance, and mentoring by at least four over the next two years and to establish a Women Veterans Business Training Resource Program to compile and disseminate information on resources available to women veterans for business training. Finally, the bill requires an independent study to identify gaps in the availability of outreach centers.

Buchanan's bill was cosponsored by 19 bipartisan Members of Congress, including House Small Business Committee Chairwoman Nydia Velazquez (D-NY) and Ranking Member Steve Chabot (R-OH). Buchanan is a member of the House Small Business Committee, and a member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The measure now goes to the Senate for consideration.

Earlier this year, the House passed an amendment authored by Buchanan aimed at improving health care treatment for wounded veterans.